

Message Text

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46

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSM-03 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

SP-02 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15

STR-04 CEA-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01

/092 W

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R 040648Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9416

INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

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AMCONSUL PORT SAID SENDS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, EG

SUBJECT: SUEZ CANAL PILOTS STAGE WORK SLOW DOWN CUM STRIKE

1. SEVERAL CONTACTS ENGAGED IN PORT SAID SHIPPING HAVE MENTIONED THAT WORK SLOW DOWN CUM STRIKE BY SUEZ CANAL PILOTS AND NOT BAD WEATHER IS CAUSE OF INCREASING CONGESTION IN PORT SAID AND SUEZ HARBORS, WHICH NOW CONTAIN 80 TO 100 VESSELS EACH.

2. DISPUTE BETWEEN PILOTS AND SCA CENTERS ON WAGES, AND EXPRESSES ITSELF IN ABSENTEEISM AND EMERGENCY LEAVE. SCA HAS PUBLICLY TAKEN POSITION THAT BAD WEATHER HAS DISTURBED DELICATE SCHEDULE BALANCE, BUT THIS FAILS TO EXPLAIN FACTS, E.G., SEVENING OF DECEMBER 1 WITH GOOD WEATHER, MODERATE WINDS, AND ABOUT 85 VESSELS OUTSIDE PORT SAID

AWAITING TRANSIT SOUTHBOUND FOUND ONLY 17 PILOTS

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AVAILABLE FOR CONVOY. POLISH VICE-CONSUL TOLD BY AGENT

THAT PILOTS HAD TAKEN OFF FOR BAIRAM.

3. SCA HAS BEEN MAKING HARD BUT QUIET ATTEMPT TO INTEREST FOREIGN PILOTS IN JOBS ON SUEZ CANAL. AT PRESENT THERE ARE TWO FOREIGN PILOTS ACTUALLY WORKING FOR SCA, ONE GERMAN AND ONE YUGOSLAVIAN, WHO ARE REPUTEDLY PAID 500 EGYPTIAN POUNDS PER MONTH.

4. WORK SLOW DOWN/STRIKE BY PILOTS PLACES GOE IN DIFFICULT POSITION, BOR PILOTS CANNOT BE EASILY OR QUICKLY REPLACED, NOR CAN SCA CONTINUE FOR LONG PERIOD OPERATING CANAL ON MARGINAL LEVEL. EXPECT SOME COMPROMISE AGREEMENT TO GET PILOTS BACK ON JOB, AND THEN SEE SCA EXPAND EFFORTS TO RECRUIT NEW PILOTS. RUMORS OF DISCONTENT AMONG PILOTS HAS CIRCULATED PORT SAID FOR AT LEAST NINE MONTHS, BUT DECISION TO STAGE COORDINATED SLOW DOWN HAS APPARENTLY CAUGHT SCA TOTALLY BY SURPRISE. PRESIDANT SADAT, WHO IS IN CANAL REGION DURING BAIRAM, APPARENTLY CANCELLED HIS UNOFFICIAL TRIP TO PORT SAID TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION WITH THE PILOTS, ACCORDING TO A LOCAL SCA OFFICIAL. SIGNED SURGER. EILTS

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